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CONSUMER TIME

R-51

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Produced by Consumers' Counsel Division of the Department of Agriculture,
and presented in cooperation with United States Government
agencies working for consumers.

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1. SOUND: CASH REGISTER . . RINGS TWICE . . CLOSE DRAWER.

2. NANCY: That's your money buying food.

3. SOUND: CASH REGISTER.

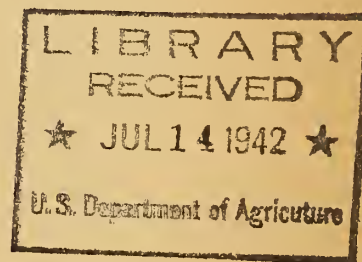
4. JOHN: That's your money paying for a home.

5. SOUND: CASH REGISTER.

6. NANCY: That's your money buying clothes.

7. JOHN: Buying you a living in wartime.

8. SOUND: CASH REGISTER . . CLOSE DRAWER.



9. MONTGOMERY: This is Don Montgomery - Consumers' Counsel in the Department of Agriculture at Washington.

Each Saturday at this hour we broadcast CONSUMER TIME because you've asked us for facts. You want to know how to spend your money wisely - how to make it work for war - and how to buy the health and strength and courage we need for victory.

You ask us for facts. You have a right to. And we're glad to give you what we have. So here are the latest ones - the consumer news of the week - from our reporter, Johnny Flynn ---

10. JOHN: The war orders straight from Washington

12. FREYMAN: Regulated - in what way, Johnny?
13. JOHN: Your rent can't go a penny higher than it was on a certain date in 1941 - unless the rooms have been substantially changed or services increased since that date.
14. FREYMAN: Since what date?
15. JOHN: Well, the maximum rent date varies from one town to another - depending on just when that particular area started booming.
16. FREYMAN: You mean - started booming for defense? Factories putting on more men - and more people moving in - and rents going up?
17. JOHN: That's it. The Government wants to keep those rents right down where they were before the place started booming.
18. FREYMAN: Well, how can they do that?
19. JOHN: By imposing a fine on people who wilfully violate the rent control law.

20. FREYMAN: So people can't go buying up property around a defense factory, and then start raising the rents.
21. JOHN: That's it. But whether people try to profit or not, the rents would probably go up anyhow - in areas where there are a lot more people wanting houses than there are places to live. Those rents would just naturally go up - if somebody didn't do something to keep them down.
22. FREYMAN: Like prices - when goods are scarce, and too many people are trying to buy them.
23. JOHN: That's it.
24. FREYMAN: Well, is this rent control something like the ceiling on prices?
25. JOHN: That's exactly what it is, Mrs. Freyman - a ceiling on rents.
26. FREYMAN: Well, how can I find out just what the rent ceiling is for my home?
27. JOHN: Wait a minute! How do you know your home is under rent control.
28. FREYMAN: Well, I don't know . . . I thought you said ---

31. JOHN: I said that twenty defense areas are already under rent control - and that, starting July even hotels and rooming houses in those areas will be included.
32. FREYMAN: Well, maybe I live in one of the twenty areas - and don't know it!
33. JOHN: I think you'd know it all right.
34. FREYMAN: How?
35. JOHN: From your newspapers. There have been stories all over the front page.
36. FREYMAN: Then I guess I'd better read them.
37. JOHN: Guess you had. If your town is included in rent control, the newspaper ought to be able to tell you all the facts you'll want to know.
38. FREYMAN: And what if my town's not included?
39. JOHN: Well, it may be before long. Right now nine million people are living in communities under rent control, and gradually the law will extend to more and more ---
40. FREYMAN: Why do they do it gradually, Johnny? Why not put the whole country under the rent control law at once --- same as they did with prices?

41. JOHN: It's a little different with rents. When a certain city gets to booming along with war industries - so that the rents there threaten to skyrocket - then the Government names that city and its suburbs a defense rental area, and recommends to the landlords there that they put their rents back down to what they used to be on such and such a date - before the town started booming.
42. FREYMAN: And what if the landlords don't put them down?
43. JOHN: Then the Government can step in and regulate the rents by law.
44. FREYMAN: Same as they have in the twenty areas already under rent control.
45. JOHN: That's right.
46. FREYMAN: Well, suppose I do live in one of those places already Johnny Then - when I pay my rent, I don't have to pay a penny more than I did back ---- when?
47. JOHN: Back on the maximum rent date - whatever that is for your particular area. Unless, of course, your home has been substantially changed.
48. FREYMAN: But suppose my home has stayed the same, and my rent has gone up five or ten dollars ----?

49. JOHN: Even if it's gone up fifty dollars - you won't have to pay a penny more than you used to.
50. FREYMAN: But what if Mr. Blutch - my landlord - insists?
51. JOHN: You just pay the legal rent.
52. FREYMAN: And if he tosses me out?
53. JOHN: He can't - so long as you obey the law. It protects you from eviction.
54. FREYMAN: Well, that's a help! But how about the extra rent I've been paying all those months in between? Will I get it back?
55. JOHN: No - you can't get it back. But from now on, till the end of the war, you won't have to pay any extra. That is unless your landlord has made a substantial change - a "major capital improvement", as the law says - in the property.
56. FREYMAN: Why do you keep harping on this "major capital improvement" ----?
57. JOHN: Because if your landlord has made a major improvement he can charge you more. For instance - if he's put in another bathroom since the maximum rent date ---
58. FREYMAN: Well, he's had the living room papered. That's why he jacked up the rent when we renewed the lease.

59. JOHN: He shouldn't jack it up just for wallpaper - not under this law. All the usual redecorating - painting and papering and so on - counts as ordinary upkeep and repair.
60. FREYMAN: But he put a new roof on, too. I know it must have cost four or five months' rent to do that.
61. JOHN: Did the house need a new roof?
62. FREYMAN: Did it! We had to run around putting pans and buckets under the leaks every time it rained.
63. JOHN: And you and your husband hadn't promised to take care of such repairs - as part payment of your rent?
64. FREYMAN: I should say not. In fact, Mr. Blutch promised to repair that roof before we moved in. Then - when he finally got around to it - he said the house was worth more ---
65. JOHN: He shouldn't get more for it - under this new law. Not unless he really raised the value of the property - by building an addition, or finishing off a room in the attic - or something like that.
66. FREYMAN: But I know he's going to think this roof is a - a major whatever it was.
67. JOHN: A major capital improvement?

68. FREYMAN: Yes.
69. JOHN: Well, your area rent director will set him straight on that point.
70. FREYMAN: Area rent director Who's he?
71. JOHN: You can find out his name by calling your newspaper. There's a rent director in every area now under rent control, and it's part of his job to explain how the law works.
72. FREYMAN: You mean - my landlord and I should go to see him?
73. JOHN: You shouldn't have to go to see him.
74. FREYMAN: Well, just suppose I did have a problem that wasn't settled - and my landlord and I went to the rent director's office ---
75. JOHN: All right - just suppose you're at his office now. It would probably be busy with people - other tenants and landlords ---
76. SOUND: FADE IN CROWD.
77. SECRETARY: (SLIGHTLY OFF MIKE) Stand in line, please. Mr. Smith will take you one at a time.
78. BLOUTCH: (ON, SOTTO) When - next Christmas?
79. FREYMAN: (QUIETLY) Sh! Mr. Bloutch!

80. BLOUTCH: Well, I think this is just a waste of time, Mrs. Freyman - standin' around here.
81. FREYMAN: It won't be long now.
82. BLOUTCH: But I'm sure I'm right about that rent ---
83. SECRETARY: (COMING ON MIKE) Please - a little more quiet!
84. 1ST WOMAN: (OFF) Well, Mr. Smith ---
85. BLOUTCH: You signed the lease ---
86. FREYMAN: Mr. Bloutch - listen!
87. BLOUTCH: Huh?
88. FREYMAN: That woman - up at the desk now. She's talking about leases ---
89. 1ST WOMAN: (FADING IN. OVERLAPPING ABOVE) But my lease said we were to get janitor service.
90. SMITH: Most apartment leases do, madam.
91. 1ST WOMAN: But now the landlord says he can't afford to include it - since he's forced to cut the rent. He says we've got to pay extra for a janitor.
92. SMITH: No - he's mistaken about that.
93. 1ST WOMAN: He says the men in the building will have to take turns keeping the lawn cut - and stoking the furnace.

94. SMITH: Wait. Was the janitor service provided back at the time of the maximum rent date?
95. 1ST WOMAN: Sure. We've had it all along -- up till now.
96. SMITH: Then he's got to go on supplying it. This rent control law definitely states that a landlord should provide the same services now as he did on the maximum rent date.
97. 1ST WOMAN: But if he doesn't ---
98. SMITH: Then we'll see to it that he either reduces your rent or restores those services.
99. 1ST WOMAN: Well, thank you, Mr. Smith.
100. SMITH: You're very welcome. And now -- who's next?
101. BLOUTCH: (FADING IN) We are. Got a problem here.
102. SMITH: What's the trouble?
103. BLOUTCH: My tenant and I can't agree on what's the legal rent.
104. FREYMAN: (FADING IN) You see, it was only thirty-five dollars on the maximum rent date ---
105. BLOUTCH: But the law says ---
106. SMITH: Just a minute -- please! Your name is Mrs. Freyman?
107. FREYMAN: Yes -- of twelve thirty-five Beecher Street. This is my landlord, Mr. Bloutch.

108. SMITH: Well, we have your house listed right here in our files. (RAISING VOICE) Miss Nelson ---
109. SECRETARY: (FADING IN) Here it is ---
110. SMITH: Let's see... "David Freyman - twelve thirty-five Beecher Street ---"
111. FREYMAN: That's it.
112. SMITH: "A five room house. Maximum rent - thirty-five dollars."
113. BLOUTCH: That was before I put the new roof on. Now the maximum rent costs forty dollars.
114. SMITH: Five dollars extra for a new roof? That's not right.
115. BLOUTCH: But the rent law says ---
116. SMITH: Here - I'll read you what it says . . . The regulations will permit an increase in maximum rent only if the alterations "bring about a substantial change in the housing accommodations by a major capital improvement, as distinguished from ordinary repair and maintenance."
117. BLOUTCH: And you don't call a roof a big improvement?
118. SMITH: Well, I'd call it an improvement, but ---
119. FREYMAN: It was certainly a big improvement over the one we had!
120. BLOUTCH: You see? She even admits it!

121. SMITH: But Mr. Bloutch ---
122. BLOUTCH: She even signed a lease. She promised to pay forty dollars a month.
123. SMITH: That doesn't matter now. All rents - whether on a written lease or not - must go back where they were on the maximum rent date.
124. FREYMAN: And what about renewal, Mr. Smith? When this lease expires ---
125. SMITH: You can renew it at the same maximum figure - thirty-five dollars.
126. BLOUTCH: Suppose I don't want to renew it?
127. SMITH: Unless you can give a good reason - and prove it to me - I think you'll have to renew that lease.
128. BLOUTCH: But that's not fair! Suppose I want to sell the house. I can't even do that! Got to let my tenants stay in as long as they want to---
129. SMITH: Hey - hold on there! That's wrong.
130. BLOUTCH: But you said I've got to renew the lease.
131. SMITH: I said - unless you have a good reason for not renewing it. Now, if you want to get that house back to sell to somebody - that's a different story.
132. BLOUTCH: You mean - I can ask my tenants to move out?

133. SMITH: If you can show me a written agreement - signed by the buyer - saying that he wants to buy it.
134. BLOUTCH: And suppose I want to get the house back for me and my family to live in?
135. SMITH: Then you can get it back - if you let me know ahead of time. And if your tenants ever fail to pay their legal rent, you can ask them to move out immediately.
136. BLOUTCH: Yeah?
137. SMITH: Yeah. And here's another way this law protects the landlord. If taxes and other expenses are rising in the area, you can petition me to raise the rent on that house.
138. BLOUTCH: I can?
139. SMITH: Absolutely. And we 'll give your petition the fairest consideration.
140. BLOUTCH: Well, say - that ain't so bad!
141. SMITH: On the contrary, Mr. - uh - I think you'll find this law is pretty good - for both the tenant and the landlord.
142. BLOUTCH: Well, maybe I just didn't understand it.

143. SMITH: Well, I do wish people wouldn't come here to the office until they do understand the rent control law and how it works. I declare, we've been so swamped with people and questions, we can't do our real work of figuring out maximum rents.
144. FREYMAN: Then I guess our job is to go home and study up on rent control. How about it, Mr. Bloutch?
145. BLOUTCH: Guess I better bone up on it, too. Guess this rent control ought to help both of us - once it gets goin'.
146. SMITH: It ought to help all of us, Mr. Bloutch. It's going to help us get through the war without going bankrupt.
147. SOUND: CROWD OF PEOPLE UP AND OUT.
148. JOHN: (ON CUE) And the rent control law should work out to everybody's benefit, Mrs. Freyman - if everybody does his best to make it work.
149. FREYMAN: Well, I'd say the first thing for all us consumers to do is find out whether or not our own living quarters are under rent control.
150. JOHN: Right. And read up on the rent control law - so that when you do come under it, you'll know what it's all about. That way, you won't be clogging up the works and crowding into your rent director's office with unnecessary questions.

151. FREYMAN: But where can we read about it, Johnny?
152. JOHN: Well, I have a Consumer Tips card here - with most of the important points from that rent control law printed right on it.
153. FREYMAN: Let's see
154. JOHN: The points about leases - and what the maximum rent date means - and - well, most everything.
155. FREYMAN: And all told in words of one syllable - and trimmed down to fit on this Tips card. That's what I like.
156. JOHN: We thought you'd like to keep that card on hand - in your household file.
157. FREYMAN: Indeed I would!
158. JOHN: Then just write in to your Consumers' Counsel and say you'd like a copy of the Tips on rent control. We'll be glad to send them to you. Isn't that right, Mr. Montgomery?

159. MONTGOMERY: (COMING ON MIKE) That's right, Johnny. And right here I'd like to say I hope you'll all take those tips on rent control - and use them. It's not only part of your wartime job as citizens; it's a democratic privilege - and a valuable one.

In the case of price control - ceiling prices in your stores - the actual job of enforcement is largely left to Government. But in this case - rent control - tenants are encouraged to work closely with the Government to see that rents are kept down where they belong. When your area goes under Federal rent control, you will be sent a copy of a statement your landlord has made as to your house, how much it rents for, and so on. Examine that statement carefully. You consumers must make sure it is correct. Under this new rent control law, the person who pays is as responsible as the person who charges rent for seeing that the rent ceilings are right and that they hold.

Now, that doesn't mean we can make unfair accusations against anyone - or try to "get even" - or work off some grudge. It's a simple, straightforward job of holding onto the cost of living with both hands. In wartime, the cost of living always tends to get out of control and go streaking off like a runaway horse. It can take us all for a terrific ride if we don't do something to stop it.

(MORE)

That's why we've got to hang onto the reins with both hands. One rein in the hands of the landlords who charge rent - the other in your hands, you who pay. And it's up to you to hang onto it - and see that this Cost of Living animal doesn't get out of hand. On this one item of living costs - rent - you really have a guiding hand. Your Government's asked you to get on the job and stay on it for the duration. So watch now - for the time when your own neighborhood goes under rent control. And when it does - you help control it.

160. FREYMAN: Indeed I will, Mr. Montgomery. I'm glad I live in a country where the consumer can help control his cost of living.
161. MONTGOMERY: Well, it's up to you. And now - what facts would you consumers like to have on next week's program?
162. FREYMAN: Well, I've been hearing that consumers in Chicago are saving cooking grease and selling it back to their butchers. Is that right?
163. MONTGOMERY: Yes, and the whole country's going to be doing it pretty soon now.
164. FREYMAN: Why? What's cooking fat good for?
165. MONTGOMERY: To make glycerine.

166. FREYMAN: Glycerine!
167. MONTGOMERY: Uh-huh. And that's good for a great many things.
Suppose we tell you all about them on next Saturday's
CONSUMER TIME.
168. FREYMAN: Fine. I'll be here. And Johnny - before I forget
it - I want to put in my request for that Consumer
Tips card on rent control.
169. JOHN: Then drop a line to your Consumers' Counsel - at
the Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.
Just tell us you want the tips on rent control,
and give us your own name and address and the call
letters of your radio station.
170. FREYMAN: Righto, Johnny - I'll do that. I want to know just
exactly how to help with rent control.
171. ANNOUNCER: How about the rest of you consumers? If you'd
like to know the facts on rent control, write in
for your copy of the Consumer Tips card. Just ask
for the tips on rent control - and tell us your own
name and address and the call letters of the radio
station to which you're listening. Address your
requests to the Consumers' Counsel - Department of
Agriculture - Washington, D.C.

(MORE)

Next week at this time, we'll bring you more valuable facts - on grease and glycerine - from your Consumers' Counsel in the Department of Agriculture, presented in cooperation with Government agencies working for consumers.

Heard on today's program were Frances Adams, Ken Banghart, John Flynn, Evelyn Freyman, Nancy Ordway, Whit Vernon, and your Consumers' Counsel Donald Montgomery.

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